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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 284th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 7 February 2005, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Annan (Secretary-General of the United Nations)
Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

05-23055 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chairman** invited the Committee to consider the nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. **Mr. Jenie** (Indonesia) said that the Committee's work was invaluable to the quest of the Palestinian people for statehood and respect. While its task was not an easy one, it made a vital contribution to the peace process. Regrettably, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had not improved over the past year. However, it was to be hoped that, with the successful conduct of presidential elections in Palestine, the peace process could be revived. The Committee would require strong, committed and dynamic leadership in the coming year, and continuity would also be important. He therefore wished to propose Mr. Badji (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chairman, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) and Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) for re-election to the two offices of Vice-Chairman and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

4. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali) seconded the nominations.

5. *Mr. Badji (Senegal), Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) and Mr. Camilleri (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Badji (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Secretary-General

7. **The Secretary-General** said that the year ahead was a very important one for the cause of peace in the Middle East. The year had begun auspiciously with the successful conduct of the Palestinian presidential elections. Palestinians could be proud of the peaceful and competitive atmosphere that had marked the election campaign. The United Nations was glad to have been able to provide assistance to the electoral authorities and would do so again for the upcoming Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

8. The Palestinian people had voted in large numbers for a candidate opposed to violence and committed to the implementation of the performance-based road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (S/2003/529, annex) and were to be applauded for doing so. He wished to congratulate the new President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, on the significant moves he had made in his first weeks in office. He was pleased to note that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel had also taken important steps.

9. The new attitude of cooperation between the parties had already borne fruit: security coordination had been restored, the two sides were in almost daily contact, and, on Tuesday, 8 February 2005, Mr. Abbas and Mr. Sharon would meet in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, together with the Egyptian President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, and King Abdullah of Jordan, in what was a welcome initiative.

10. The situation, however, remained very fragile. The parties must be encouraged to deepen their political dialogue and to match their positive words with action on the ground. In his inaugural address, Mr. Abbas had confirmed his readiness to restart final status negotiations with Israel. He had also committed himself to restructuring the Palestinian security forces, strengthening Palestinian institutions and carrying forward democratic reform. He was sure that Mr. Abbas would move swiftly to act on those commitments. At the same time, he looked forward to the early implementation of Mr. Sharon's disengagement plan, in coordination with the Palestinian leadership, as an important step leading to the implementation of the road map.

11. He urged all Member States to help the parties meet their commitments and strengthen their cooperation so as to ensure that the opportunity for progress towards peace now at hand was firmly grasped. The United Nations would continue to work with its partners in the Quartet for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on Security Council resolutions and within the framework of the road map.

12. In the meantime, the economic plight of the Palestinians demanded attention and action. Alleviating their suffering and providing economic opportunity was a humanitarian imperative and an important contribution to peace. United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food

Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, brought help and opportunity to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who desperately needed them. Those efforts needed the strong and sustained support of donors and the international community.

13. He thanked the Committee for its contribution to the goal of achieving peace in the Middle East and wished it success in carrying out its mandate in such an important year for the future of the Palestinian people.

Statement by the Chairman

14. **The Chairman**, speaking as the representative of Senegal, said that the presence of the Secretary-General at the meeting demonstrated his strong commitment to the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination, sovereignty and independence, which, moreover, was the Committee's raison d'être. He thanked the members of the Committee for the trust they had placed in Senegal and assured them that his Government would maintain its tradition of unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people, while emphasizing that that tradition had not prevented Senegal from having relations of mutually advantageous cooperation with Israel.

15. The year had begun auspiciously with the successful conduct of presidential elections in Palestine. By electing Mr. Mahmoud Abbas to the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority with a large majority, the Palestinian people had demonstrated their great maturity and their commitment to continue, in a spirit of unity and cohesion, their irresistible march to self-determination. He wished to congratulate the Palestinian people and their leaders on that achievement, which had created a new political climate and opened favourable prospects for the continuation of the political dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. In that connection, he welcomed the summit to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

16. The Committee, for its part, would continue to support all efforts to achieve an effective solution to the question of Palestine and to mobilize the international community to help the Palestinian people realize their inalienable rights.

17. He urged both parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to refrain from any act that could destabilize the already precarious situation or undermine the trust that seemed to have been re-established between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. Above all, Israelis and Palestinians must commit themselves firmly and in good faith to the implementation of the road map, which, in the Committee's view, remained the best way of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the conflict through the creation of two States, Israel and Palestine, based on the 1967 borders. Any solution to the Palestinian question must also reflect the terms of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and of the other relevant United Nations resolutions. No unilateral action outside that framework by either party could contribute to the achievement of a durable peace, unless, of course, it facilitated the implementation of the road map.

18. He called on the Quartet and the international community to intensify still further their efforts to resolve the question of Palestine. The Committee would continue to work to that end in cooperation with all the parties concerned and with all interested partners.

Statement by the Observer for Palestine

19. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) expressed appreciation to the members of the Committee and the observers for their constant support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, independence and statehood, and for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. In that connection, she welcomed the Committee's draft programme of work for 2005 (A/AC.183/2005/CRP.1), which was objective and realistic.

20. The Committee played an important role in the Organization's ongoing efforts to address the situation of the Palestinian people. She wished to reiterate that, as the International Court of Justice had affirmed in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, the United Nations had a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until the question was resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international legitimacy. Accordingly, the Organization must continue to strive for the effective realization and exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights. After so many years of loss and suffering, the attainment of that noble goal was more pressing than ever.

21. While there had been some positive developments, the overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained critical and the dangers posed by the continuing occupation were very real. As the International Court of Justice had stated, there was an urgent necessity for the United Nations as a whole to redouble its efforts to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a speedy conclusion, thereby establishing a just and lasting peace in the region. In particular, serious efforts must be made towards the resumption and reinvigoration of the peace process with a view to the realization of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

22. Lastly, she expressed deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, whose participation in the meeting reaffirmed the importance he attached to the Committee's work and to the question of Palestine as a whole and his commitment to achieving a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She was grateful to him for his efforts, both within the United Nations and as a member of the Quartet, to promote peace and security throughout the Middle East.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean

23. **The Chairman**, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the Governments and peoples of the countries affected by the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Tribute to the memory of Mr. Sami Kronfol, Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations

24. **The Chairman** paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Sami Kronfol.

25. **Mr. Assaf** (Observer for Lebanon) expressed appreciation for the Committee's condolences on the death of his country's Permanent Representative.

Report by the Chairman on developments since the previous meeting

26. **The Chairman** recalled the strong support given by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session to the four resolutions submitted to it by the Committee. The General Assembly's vote had once again clearly indicated the importance attached by the majority of Member States to the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, based on the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, and had emphasized the continued responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine until it was resolved in all its aspects.

27. On 10 January 2005, he had sent a letter on behalf of the Committee to Mr. Mahmoud Abbas congratulating him on his election as the new President of the Palestinian Authority. He had also congratulated the Palestinian people for conducting the campaign and election in an orderly and peaceful manner. The outcome of the elections had demonstrated the Palestinian people's enduring resilience and determination. The Committee would remain committed to the cause of the Palestinian people until they were finally able to exercise their inalienable rights in a free and independent Palestinian State.

28. The political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had been evolving rapidly. The Palestinian Authority and Israel had resumed cooperation on security matters and there had been a noticeable calming of violence in recent weeks. Israeli officials had indicated that security control over the Gaza Strip and a number of West Bank towns would revert to the Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority under President Abbas was taking firm steps to implement measures under the first phase of the road map. Those encouraging developments were good cause for hope.

Draft programme of work of the Committee (A/AC.183/2005/CRP.1)

29. **The Chairman** introduced the draft programme of work for 2005 (A/AC.183/2005/CRP.1) which summarized the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session concerning the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information, set out priority issues for 2005 and outlined the proposed activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights.

30. Aware of the dangers posed by the continuing Israeli settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the Committee would continue to emphasize the importance of ceasing and reversing all settlement activities in order to create conditions conducive to the resumption of the political process. It would also strive

to work with maximum effectiveness in order to respond adequately and in a timely manner to the rapidly evolving situation on the ground, while promoting a constructive discussion of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and mobilizing international assistance for the Palestinian people.

31. In preparing the draft programme of work, the Bureau of the Committee had been guided by the need to make it more responsive to recent developments in the peace process. The Committee would continue to review the proposed programme in that light and would make adjustments as necessary.

32. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali) said that his delegation endorsed the draft programme of work and particularly welcomed the inclusion of a reference to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (para. 16) and the Committee's intention to encourage participation by countries and organizations which thus far had not engaged fully in its programme of work (para. 18). While some of the criticisms made during the General Assembly's consideration of the draft resolution concerning the Committee (A/59/L.34) were ideological in nature, other aspects — which had, moreover, resulted in the defection of certain countries that usually supported the draft resolution — were constructive and should be taken into account. In addition, although Committee documents would now be posted on the "Question of Palestine" web site, it would be useful to make documents available to Committee members before meetings.

33. **The Chairman** said that the fact that the Committee was criticized year after year, and indeed had been rejected by some at its very inception, came as no surprise, as it dealt with a highly political issue. He wished to point out, however, that over the years, many improvements had been made to its working methods and to the way in which it presented the situation on the ground. While the Committee would continue to take note of criticism, that should not prevent it from exercising its mandate. Indeed, many of the Committee's ideas had been rejected in the past, only to be accepted over time. He had nonetheless taken note of the comments made by the representative of Mali and agreed that it was important to listen to Member States' opinions.

34. *The draft programme of work of the Committee for 2005 (A/AC.183/2005/CRP.1) was adopted.*

Status of preparations for the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine to be held on 8 and 9 March 2005 at the United Nations Office at Geneva

35. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the provisional programme of work for the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine to be held on 8 and 9 March 2005 at the United Nations Office at Geneva, contained in working paper No. 1. Preparations for the meeting were progressing, and invitations had been sent to the participants. The central theme of the meeting would be the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

36. *The programme of work for the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was adopted.*

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

37. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, appeared relatively calm yet remained very critical. Recent developments had led to cautious optimism and renewed hope for a tangible improvement in terms of the security situation and the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian people.

38. Despite many difficulties arising mainly from the severe restrictions on movement imposed by Israel, the Palestinian people had held the first municipal elections in almost 20 years in December 2004. The President of the Palestinian Authority had been elected in January 2005, and elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council were scheduled for July 2005. All those positive developments contributed towards the enhancement of Palestinian political discourse, the development and strengthening of national institutions and the ultimate achievement of the people's inalienable rights.

39. Renewed hope regarding the resumption of peace negotiations was reflected in the anticipation surrounding the summit meeting to be convened on 8 February 2005 at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Her delegation hoped that the meeting would lead to the

full implementation of the road map and the speedy conclusion of a final peace settlement under the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, based on the pre-1967 borders.

40. Israel's continued oppressive occupation remained a source of deep anger and frustration among the Palestinian people. The positive measures that had been taken and ongoing efforts made by the Palestinian side to calm the situation on the ground were set against the backdrop of the occupying Power's illegal practices, particularly those aimed at further seizing and colonizing Palestinian land. Its actions constituted serious violations of international law, including human rights and humanitarian law. The recent attempt by the Government of Israel to entrench its unlawful annexation of East Jerusalem by reinstating the Absentee Property Act, while a failure, had been a stark reflection of Israel's colonial intentions and bad faith, which were absolutely contrary to the conditions for a resumption of the peace process.

41. Israel's continuing unlawful construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was a flagrant violation of international law and contravened the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. Israel must comply with its legal obligations and immediately cease construction of the wall, dismantle the parts of it situated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and make reparations for all damage caused by its construction. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's recent announcement regarding the establishment of a register of damage, and urged that it should come into effect as soon as possible. Many thousands of Palestinian civilians were currently imprisoned in walled enclaves, and the impact of the wall's construction, particularly in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, was particularly grave. The only way to prevent a further exacerbation of the humanitarian hardships inflicted on the Palestinian people and to salvage the prospects for the achievement of the two-State solution was to compel Israel to abide by international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

42. Israel continued its dangerous military campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, killing and wounding Palestinian civilians, one of whom was a 10-year-old girl who had been shot dead in a school yard in Rafah on 31 January 2005. During the first month of 2005, the occupying Power had killed more than 60 Palestinians, since September 2000, the total number of Palestinian martyrs had risen to more than 3,620. Further, the fragile ceasefire called by the Palestinian side to halt the violence would be completely undermined if Israel could not restrain itself from assassinations and use of force against civilians under its occupation. It was now Israel's turn to declare a ceasefire.

43. Israel must cease its illegal destruction of Palestinian property, the demolition of homes, the razing of agricultural land and the destruction of vital infrastructure, all of which rendered more and more Palestinian families homeless and deprived them of their livelihoods. The occupying Power was even considering the destruction of between 200 and 3,000 homes in Gaza for the purpose of creating a so-called "buffer zone" along its border with Egypt. Rafah had already been devastated by Israel's wanton destruction. In addition, the occupying Power continued severely to restrict the freedom of movement of Palestinians by means of closures, checkpoints and roadblocks throughout the Occupied Territory and the construction of the wall. Such collective punishment of the entire Palestinian population gravely affected their socio-economic situation and deepened the humanitarian hardships that they faced.

44. Clearly, the Palestinian national struggle still faced great challenges. Ending the 37-year occupation, enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, achieving a just resolution of the plight of the Palestine refugees and establishing an independent State were the highest priorities. To that end, the international community and the United Nations had to take urgent measures. The international community could not allow the occupying Power to continue to act with impunity while defenceless Palestinian civilians suffered as a result. Israel must be compelled to abide by international law. The international community must actively assist the two sides to resume peace negotiations and advance towards the realization of the two-State solution. The Palestinian Authority had affirmed its readiness to fulfil all its obligations under the road map. Israel must do likewise. Peace could not be achieved while Israel continued to pursue its illegal policies and practices against the Palestinian people. Israel must abandon the

military option and its colonial enterprise in favour of the peace option.

45. **Mr. Mekdad** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that his Government was keenly aware of the continued suffering of the Palestinian people caused by Israel's occupation and repressive practices, including settlements, the demolition of homes and the construction of the wall, all of which had been condemned by the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice. The Syrian Arab Republic hosted half a million Palestinian refugees. It supported the Palestinian people and the principle of national unity as the surest guarantee of an end to the occupation and the attainment of their rights. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), land-for-peace and the principles of the Madrid Conference represented the best means to effect an end to the conflict and the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 285th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 May 2005, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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Report by the Chairman on his attendance at the Peace in Palestine Conference, 28-30 March 2005, Putrajaya, Malaysia

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee

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Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

05-34094 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report by the Chairman on developments since the previous meeting

2. **The Chairman** said that he would be reporting later on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine which had been held on 8 and 9 March 2005 in Geneva, and on the consultations with civil society organizations that had followed.

3. He drew attention to a letter he had written, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, to the Secretary-General (A/ES-10/301-S/2005/262) expressing the Committee's deep concern about Israel's activities aimed at expanding its settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reiterating that the continued creation by Israel of facts on the ground contradicted the road map, which obligated the Israeli Government to dismantle settlement outposts and freeze all settlement activity.

4. On 6 May 2005, the Secretary-General had appointed Mr. Alvaro de Soto as United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and as his Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. He looked forward to working in close cooperation with Mr. de Soto towards the full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and of the road map with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

5. Also on 6 May 2005, he had met with representatives of civil society organizations active in the United Nations and/or in the Greater New York area. The meeting had taken place in conjunction with the screening of a documentary entitled "Rachel — an American Conscience". The NGOs had briefed him on their recent initiatives, and he had discussed with them the status of preparations for the 2005 United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People. It had been agreed with the NGO Steering Committee that the Conference would be convened in early summer in a European city in order to reach out to civil society organizations in Europe and the Middle East.

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

6. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained critical, as there had been only minor improvements on the ground. The Palestinian people continued to feel deep anger and frustration at the harsh conditions they faced. The Palestinian Authority had taken positive steps to calm the situation, in line with its firm commitment to the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings. Regrettably, those measures had been taken against the backdrop of incessant human rights violations committed by the occupying Israeli forces against the Palestinian people, including the killing of 30 civilians since the Sharm el-Sheikh summit and the wounding of at least 241 others, the destruction and demolition of civilian property and the imposition of severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinian persons and goods by means of closures, checkpoints and roadblocks.

7. She was pleased to note, however, that local and municipal elections had been held on 6 May 2005. According to election monitors, including international observers, the elections had been transparent and had taken place in a positive environment. The success of the elections, and of the recent presidential elections, and the holding of the forthcoming Legislative Council elections would make a significant contribution to the strengthening of national institutions and the rule of law.

8. A number of critical issues were placing a great strain on the fragile situation on the ground. The occupying Power was intensifying its illegal policies aimed at changing the legal status, demographic composition and character of occupied East Jerusalem. Just two months earlier, the Israeli Government had approved plans to build an additional 3,500 housing units in the "Ma'ale Adumim" settlement, the largest illegal Israeli settlement located east of Jerusalem in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The intention was to connect the settlement with West Jerusalem, thereby encircling occupied East Jerusalem and cutting it off from its natural Palestinian surroundings. Such illegal actions were in flagrant violation of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention.

9. Also, in recent weeks, Israeli extremists had made several attempts to carry out an attack on the

Haram al-Sharif. In response to the latest attempt, the occupying Israeli forces had chosen to punish the Palestinian population for the illegal actions of the Israeli extremists by closing off all entrances to Jerusalem and preventing Palestinians from entering the Haram al-Sharif. Moreover, they had used excessive force against the thousands of Palestinians in the vicinity, critically wounding at least 18 persons. The Palestinian leadership viewed such actions as grave threats to the prospects for peace in the region and would hold the Israeli Government responsible for any harm that might befall the Haram al-Sharif. It had called on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to protect all Muslim and Christian and holy sites and to put an end, once and for all, to attempts to desecrate such sites.

10. The construction of illegal Israeli settlements, and of the expansionist wall, was a flagrant breach of international law, demonstrated total contempt for the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 and constituted a clear violation of the road map. There must be a complete cessation of such activities, which threatened to destroy any possibility of achieving peace in the region. The Palestinian Authority welcomed the insistence by the United States Government that Israel must honour its commitment to halt settlement expansion, and hoped that those words would be translated into deeds. The Palestinian leadership would continue to seek international support to pressure Israel to end its colonization of Palestinian land. With respect to the wall, it would seek the full implementation of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, which called on Israel to comply with its legal obligations as mentioned in the Advisory Opinion. The Palestinian Authority had urged the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to submit to Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Conventions, recommendations for specific measures to ensure respect by Israel for the Convention.

11. She reaffirmed the importance that the Palestinian Authority attached to the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings. It had taken firm and consistent steps towards their full implementation, including reform of the security services and other institutions. Regrettably, Israel had made little progress in fulfilling its obligations, which included withdrawing from Palestinian cities, halting violence and destruction, releasing Palestinian prisoners and allowing the return of deportees. She underscored that the Palestinian side expected the occupying Israeli forces to withdraw to pre-September 2000 positions. In addition, deportees must be allowed to return to their original places of residence.

12. Israel continued to delay its planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank based on false and groundless assertions. That withdrawal, when it took place, must be viewed as the first step towards the implementation of Israel's obligations under the road map. It must not result in any change in the legal status of the area concerned. That would be a violation of the principle of the territorial integrity and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As the Palestinian Authority had made clear, the option of a State with temporary borders was unacceptable.

13. In the context of the security coordination between the two sides, the Israeli Government should provide the Palestinian Authority with all necessary information concerning the arrangements for the withdrawal and the period afterwards. The withdrawal from Gaza must be complete and must include the Salah al-Din border area near Egypt. It must be followed by withdrawal from the West Bank to pre-September 2000 positions. A safe passage must be established between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and all restrictions on the movement of Palestinian persons and goods within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, must be eliminated. Furthermore, a clear plan must be developed for the reconstruction and opening of a functioning airport and seaport and for the reopening of all commercial border crossings, including Beit Hanoun, if Gaza was not to become a walled prison following the intended withdrawal. The Rafah crossing, Gaza's only access point to the outside world, must be placed under Palestinian control. Lastly, in accordance with international law, the land must be returned in its original state.

14. The socio-economic situation of the Palestinian people continued to deteriorate. The Palestinian Authority appreciated the assistance provided by the international community to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and the pledges of assistance made at the London Meeting on supporting the Palestinian Authority. However, it wished to make clear that, while there would have to be a special focus on Gaza and the northern West Bank following the planned Israeli withdrawal, development assistance

strategies must incorporate plans for the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

15. The Palestinian Authority was committed to the implementation of the road map, which would facilitate the revival of the peace process and the resumption of final status negotiations based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. In that connection, it would welcome the convening of an international peace conference in the second half of the year, as had been proposed by some Governments. It stood ready to engage actively and positively in any endeavour that would contribute to the realization of the goals of ending the Israeli occupation, establishing a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, establishing a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region and achieving the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including the rights to self-determination and independence.

16. **Mr. Mekdad** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was marked by contradictions. Israel was planning to withdraw from Gaza, yet, at the same time, the Israeli Government was planning a massive settlement expansion. Colonists removed from Gaza would simply be relocated to settlements in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem. That policy was very dangerous and threatened to create an explosive and bloody situation in the Middle East. The Committee must therefore redouble its efforts to halt the Israeli plans.

17. Flouting international law was a long-standing practice of the Israeli leadership. Notwithstanding the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, Israel was proceeding with the construction of its expansionist wall and more settlements were being built. The United Nations must assume its responsibility to address the threat posed by the aggressive policies of Israel and secure the implementation of all relevant resolutions.

18. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea) said that his Government remained committed to the struggle of the Palestinian people for liberation. With the emergence of democratic Palestinian institutions, the prospects for success in that struggle had improved. It was therefore critical for the Committee to intensify its efforts in support of the Palestinian people.

Report by the Chairman on the United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine held on 8 and 9 March 2005 at the United Nations Office at Geneva, and the consultations with civil society organizations held on 10 March 2005

19. **The Chairman** said that the Meeting had had as its theme "Implementing the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory — The role of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society", and had focused inter alia on the responsibility of Governments and intergovernmental organizations and the role of parliaments and civil society in promoting respect for international law.

20. While welcoming Israel's intention to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, participants had underscored the importance of implementation within the framework of the road map and had cautioned against any transfer of Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, reiterating that Israel must comply with its legal obligations to cease the construction of the wall in the Occupied Territory. To that end, they had urged Member States to prohibit individuals or entities under their jurisdiction from assisting in the construction of the wall and had called on the international community to adopt measures to persuade the Government of Israel to comply with international law and the Advisory Opinion.

21. The report of the International Meeting would be available online and would also be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

22. The Committee delegation had also met the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. Anders Johnsson, who had informed it of IPU efforts to assist the Palestinian Authority in finalizing the electoral law and strengthening the oversight role of the Palestinian Legislative Council, its budget committees and its activities in the field of human rights. It was crucial for IPU to bring together members of the Knesset and the Council. Mr. Johnsson had also drawn attention to the forthcoming meeting of speakers of parliaments at United Nations Headquarters, which would provide the opportunity to establish direct contacts between Committee members and parliamentarians. It had been agreed that participation of parliamentarians in the meetings

organized under the auspices of the Committee should be expanded.

23. On 10 March 2005, the delegation had held consultations with 24 representatives of non-governmental organizations on the Committee's programme of cooperation with civil society. Some representatives had emphasized the need to explain to civil society the parameters of a solution based on relevant United Nations resolutions and had cited examples of how to engage Governments in a dialogue regarding adherence to the Advisory Opinion. The representatives of the United States Presbyterian Church and the World Council of Churches had called for divestment from companies that promoted Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and, in that connection, a number of representatives had urged the United Nations to call for socially responsible investment.

24. Representatives had also suggested that the next International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People should be held in Europe and should focus on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Bureau of the Committee would take those suggestions into account.

25. He took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report.

26. *It was so decided.*

Report by the Chairman on his attendance at the Peace in Palestine Conference, 28-30 March 2005, Putrajaya, Malaysia

27. **The Chairman** said that the Conference, which had been organized by Peace Malaysia, had brought together civil society groups from all over the world, in an effort to intensify the international campaign for peace between Israelis and Palestinians and for an independent Palestinian State.

28. The Conference had concluded by adopting the Putrajaya Action Plan which called, inter alia, for the establishment of an International Centre on Palestine for Civil Society in the South, to be located in Malaysia. The Centre would coordinate the activities of existing Palestinian support groups and networks in the South; initiate the creation of new support groups and networks in developing countries; forge close ties with Palestinian support groups in North America and Europe; and develop an effective relationship with the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the International Coordinating Network on Palestine.

29. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) expressed deep appreciation for the importance attached by the Government and people of Malaysia to the issue of Palestine and expressed her delegation's support for the development of the International Centre on Palestine.

30. **Mr. Mohd Radzi** (Malaysia) said that Conference had been intended to break the stalemate in the peace process. He welcomed the establishment of the Centre, which should contribute to other initiatives for the promotion of peace in Palestine.

31. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to take note of the report.

32. *It was so decided.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee

33. **The Chairman** said that the following non-governmental organizations had applied to be accredited with the Committee: Association des juristes Maliennes, Friends of Al-Aqsa, International Forum for Justice and Peace, Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Jerusalem Center for Educational Enrichment, Palestinian American Culture and Friendship Association, Palestinians for Peace and Democracy and The Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture. The Bureau of the Committee had reviewed the applications and was recommending that they should be accredited.

34. He took it that the Committee wished to accredit those organizations.

35. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.